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Message Text

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41
ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EURE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 INRE-00 USIE-00

CIAE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-02

PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 EB-07 OFA-01 DLOS-04 IO-11 ACDA-10

OMB-01 TRSE-00 SAJ-01 SAM-01 /090 W
---------- 004104
O R 161815Z JAN 76
FM AMEMBASSY REYKJAVIK
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5969
INFO COMICEDEFOR
CINCLANT
SECDEF
CNO
AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN
AMEMBASSY HELSINKI
AMEMBASSY LONDON IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY OSLO
AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM
USNATO IMMEDIATE 1300

UNCLAS REYKJAVIK 0093

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: EFIS, PFOR, IC, UK
SUBJECT: ICELAND-UK FISHERIES DISPUTE: PRIME MINISTER'S PRESS CONFERENCE

REF: REYKJAVIK 0092 161745Z JAN 76

SUMMARY: WHILE HOLDING FIRMLY TO GOI POSITIONS RE LUNS VISIT AND DEMAND FOR WITHDRAWAL OF BRITISH FRIGATES, PRIMEMIN HALLGRIMSSON TOOK SLIGHTLY MORE CONCILIATORY STAND IN PRESS CONFERENCE TODAY. HE REITERATED THAT LUNS WAS CARRYING NO MESSAGE FROM COI TO LONDON AND THAT WITHDRAWAL MUST TAKE PLACE WITHIN ONE WEEK WITHOUT PRECONDITIONS IF
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DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS NOT BE BROKEN. HOWEVER,

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Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006

HE REBUTTED ANY SUGGESTION ICELAND SHOULD WITHDRAW FROM NATO
AND EXPLAINED WHY IDF HAS NOT BEEN INVOLVED IN DISPUTE.
SAID THAT IF FRIGATES WITHDRAWN, HE BELIVED NEW NEGOTIATIONS
COULD TAKE PLACE ALTHOUGH NEGOTIATING MARGIN VERY SMALL.
END SUMMARY.

FOLLOWING DEPARTURE OF NATO SECGEN LUNS, PRIMEMIN
HALLGRIMSSON HELD PRESS CONFERENCE THIS AFTERNOON WHICH HE
OPENED WITH STATEMENT OUTLINING EVENTS OF RECENT DAYS AND
PROBABLE NEXT STEPS BY ICELAND. HE SAID HE EXPECTED FINAL
RESULTS OF MARITIME INVESTIGATION INTO LAST INCIDENT ON FISHING
GROUND WOULD SHOW BRITISH FULLY CULPABLE AND HE THOUGHT
ALTHING FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMITTEE WOULD THEN AT MEETING
TODAY RECOMMEND BREAK IN UK-ICELANDIC DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS.
AT CABINET MEETING NEXT MONDAY OR TUESDAY, HE THOUGHT GOVERNMENT
WOULD THE DECIDE TO SET PERIOD OF ABOUT ONE WEEK AFTER WHICH
RELATIONS WOULD BE BROKEN IF FRIGATES HAD NOT BEEN
REMOVED FROM CLAIMED 200 MIOE ZONE. IN FOLLOWING
QUESTIONING, HE DENIED THIS CONSITUTED AN ULTIMATUM BUT SAID
"WE ARE GIVING THE BRITISH AN OPPORTUNITY TO PREVENT A DIPLOMATIC
BREAK. IT IS THE BRITISH WHO WILL DECIDE WHETHER A
SEVERANCE IS TO TAKE PLACE."

PRIME MIN DENIED SECGEN LUNS WAS CARRYING ANY MESSAGE
FROM GOI TO BRITISH AND STRESSED THAT NO UNDERTAKING HAD
BEEN GIVEN NOT TO HARASS BRITISH FISHING TRAWLERS IF
FRIGATES WERE REMOVED. SAID ICELANDIC LAW WOULD BE FULLY
ENFORCED WITHIN 200 MILE ZONE. HE SAW CURRENT ICELANDIC
PLANS AS BEING COMPLETELY ASIDE FROM LUNS MISSION. WHEN
ASKED IF BREAK IN RELATIONS MIGHT BE SELF-DEFEATING IF
IT CAME IN MIDST OF LUNS EFFORTS, HE EVADED ANSWER BY SAYING
ONLY THAT PRESSURES OF TIMING WERE SUCH THAT LONGER DELAY
IN REMOVAL OF FRIGATES COULD NOT BE TOLERATED. "THE DISPUTE
HAS NOW REACHED SUCH A STAGE THAT ICELAND'S HONOR IS AT STAKE."

WHEN ASKED WHETHER A WITHDRAWAL OF THE FRIGATES WOULD BE
FOLLOWED BY A RESUMPTION OF NEGOTIATIONS, HE CLAIMED ICELAND
HAD ALWAYS BEEN PREPARED TO DISCUSS ITS DIFFERENCE WITH OTHER
COUNTRIES IF NO FORCE WERE USED AND PRESENCE OF NAVAL VESSELS
NOW MADE TALKS IMPOSSIBLE. HOWEVER, IF THEY WERE WITHDRAWN,
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"I SHOULD THINK UNDER THOSE CIRCUMSTANCES WE MIGHT HAVE ANOTHER
ROUND OF TALKS ALTHOUGH WE HAVE A VERY SLENDER MARGIN FOR
THE POSSIBILITY OF SETTLEMENT."

IN REPLY TO QUESTION AS TO WHETHER ICELAND WILL TRY TO
PUT PRESSURE ON NATO ALLIES TO FORCE BRITISH WITHDRAWAL,
HALLGRIMSSON SAID HE HOPED ALL NATO COUNTRIES WOULD SEE THAT
IT IS AGAINST NATO'S INTERESTS TO HAVE ONE MEMBER USE NAVAL

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FORCE AGAINST ANOTHER. WHEN THEN ASKED IF BREAK IN RELATIONS WITH BRITS WOULD AFFECT ICELAND'S RELATIONS WITH NATO, HE SAID, "WE ARE NOT MAKING ANY CHANGES IN THAT RESPECT. WE ARE MEMBERS OF NATO AND WE ARE PUTTING QUITE A LOT OF RELIANCE ON NATO." ON OF THE REASONS NATO WAS FORMED WAS BECAUSE THE UN SECURITY COUNCIL WAS UNABLE TO SOLVE MANY DISPUTES BETWEEN MEMBERS, SC WAS UNABLE TO SOLVE ICELAND'S CURRENT DISPUTE BUT "WE ARE NOT DECIDING TO WITHDRAW FROM THE UNITED NATIONS AND NOT FROM NATO. BUT WE WILL MAKE OUR DECISIONS REGARDING INTER-NATIONAL BODIES DEPENDENT ON THEIR USEFULNESS TO US." LATER HE SAID, "OUR QUARREL IS NOT WITH NATO OR WITH THE UN BUT WITH THE BRITISH."

ON DEFENSEMATTERS, PM WAS ASKED HOW IDF COMES INTO CURRENT PROBLEM AND WHY IT HAS TAKEN NO ACTION AGAINST BRITISH. HALLGRIMSSON REPLIED THAT IDF INTERVENTION HAD NOT BEEN REQUESTED IN 1958, 1972 OR NOW BECAUSE AGREEMENT ON WHICH PRESENCE OF IDF IS BASED PROVIDES NO GROUND ON WHICH IT COULD BE DONE. "NO ONE COUNTRY OF THE ALLIANCE CAN TELL ANOTHER MEMBER WHAT TO DO. ALTHOUGH WE BUILD OUR TRUST ON NATO, WE CANNOT EXPECT THEM TO PREVENT THE BRITISH FROM DOING WHAT THEY ARE DOING." REPORTER PERSISTED BY ASKING, "BUT DOESN'T IDF HAVE AN OBLIGATION TO DEFEND US AGAINST AN OUTSIDE ATTACK?" PRIMEMIN REPLIED, "NOT FROM A COUNTRY WITHIN THE ALLIANCE UNLESS THERE IS A BREACH OF INTERNATIONAL LAW." THE REPORTER THEN ASKED WHETHER THIS SHOULD HAVE APPLIED TO INCIDENT WITHIN 4 MILE TERRITORIAL WATERS LIMIT. HALLGRIMSSON, REPLIED "IF THERE WERE REPEATED BREACHES, THEN IT IS POSSIBLE THE IDF MIGHT BECOME INVOLVED."

IN REPLY TO QUESTION AS TO WHETHER RECENT ACTIONS BY GROUPS IN BLOCKADING BASE FACILITIES HAD BEEN USEFUL, UNCLASSIFIED

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PAGE 04 REYKJA 00093 161940Z

PRIMEMIN SAID, "I THOUGHT THESE ACTIONS WERE AGAINST THE INTERESTS OF ICELAND AND I REGRET THEM." HE PRAISED THE RESTRAINT AND RESPONSIBILITY SHOWN BY THE LEADERS OF THE DEMONSTRATIONS BUT WARED OF THE DANGER THAT EVENTS COULD GET OUT OF THEIR CONTROL.
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